

you really want to defund the police. Well, unsurprisingly, Psaki couldn't name a single Republican who said they wanted to defund the police or who gave defunding the police as a reason for not voting for Biden's \$1.9 trillion, pork-filled spending bill.

The fact of the matter is, Republicans are proud to support the police, to stand with the men and women of blue, while Democrats are demonizing and vilifying the brave men and women of law enforcement.

I want to say thank you to every law enforcement officer in this country, on the Federal level and on the State and local level. Thank you for answering the call each day, putting on the uniform, wearing the badge, and risking your life to keep us safe.

This morning, all across this country, law enforcement officers woke up, they kissed their husband or wife goodbye, they kissed their kids goodbye, and they went out to defend our communities, and they did so not knowing if they would come home that night. We are proud to stand with the men and women of our police departments.

When it comes to facts and fiction, it is a cynical and calculated lie from the Biden White House that it is anybody other than Democrats who are leading the foolhardy charge to abolish and defund the police. It is dangerous, crime rates are skyrocketing, and it is an exceptionally bad idea.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). The Senator from Maryland.

HELSINKI COMMISSION

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I take this time to talk about the work of the U.S. Helsinki Commission in a recent opportunity we had to participate in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

I am joined on the floor by Senator WICKER, who is the Republican chair of the Helsinki Commission. The two of us have worked together in a non-partisan, bipartisan manner in regards to the work of the Helsinki Commission. I just want to spend a few minutes, and then I am going to yield the floor and allow Senator WICKER to give his comments.

The OSCE, as the chair is fully aware as a member of the Commission, represents the U.S. participation in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe—57 states, which includes all of Europe, all of the former Republics of the Soviet Union, and Canada and the United States.

The Commission works on the principle of three buckets: one for political affairs and security, another for economic and environmental progress, and the third on democracy and human rights. But it recognizes—and I think this has been the hallmark of the Helsinki Commission—that you can't have advancements on political affairs or security or economic or environmental progress unless you make progress on democracy and human rights, that they are interwoven. In the Helsinki

Commission, the OSCE is best known for its advancements for basic human rights.

So I think of the initiatives that we have had in the Helsinki Commission for dealing with trafficking in humans and the legislation that came out of that and how we led the global response to dealing with trafficking. I think about the efforts we made in regards to tolerance, dealing with anti-Semitism, racism, and intolerance and how we have made progress throughout the entire OSCE region. I think about the issues we did in regards to sanctions against human rights violators so they cannot use our banking system or visit our country, the Magnitsky-type sanctions. All of that came out of the work of the Helsinki Commission.

So one of the major arms of our work is the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which is the group of parliamentarians who meet every year and have meetings throughout the year to exchange views and to carry out the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

For the last year and a half, we have been compromised because we haven't had an opportunity to meet in person, and it required us to meet by internet, and we have, but we had a unique opportunity during the last recess period to actually travel and meet with the parliamentarians. We had an OSCE Parliamentary Assembly annual meeting in Vienna. And we had a chance to do this in a hybrid manner. So we were able to travel 12-strong from the U.S. Congress to be at that meeting, and we were joined by five others here in the United States, including our Presiding Officer, to participate in the Parliamentary Assembly, and we were able to advance a lot of very important issues.

But I must tell you, we were noticed at this meeting. The U.S. presence was critically important in dealing with some very timely issues. I know that Senator WICKER will talk about this. He is one of the great leaders of the Parliamentary Assembly. He is Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly. We are very proud of the leadership position that he holds.

By the way, his election was in Vienna to be the Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly. We had multiple candidates and several elected to Vice Presidents, but Senator WICKER led the ballot with the largest number of votes, which I think speaks to his well-thought-of respect among the OSCE parliamentarians.

We wanted to make sure that this was a substantive meeting. Quite frankly, the leadership of the Parliamentary Assembly said: Let's just get in there and get it over with and not bring up anything controversial. But that is not the way we operate. We have to take up current issues.

So we took up the issue of tolerance. I was happy to sponsor a resolution that ultimately passed by unanimous vote that speaks to anti-Semitism, racism, intolerance, and the growth of

hate in the OSCE region. But we also made sure that we considered the recent elections in Belarus and how unfair those elections were and how Mr. Lukashenko has been acting in a way that is so contrary to the human rights of the people who live there, and the election results there do not reflect the will of the people.

We also had a chance to make sure we took up the issues concerning Ukraine. Once again, there was a lot of controversy on why you should bring that up during this meeting. We did. We supported that to make it clear that Russia's aggression and its occupation of Crimea and its interference in eastern Ukraine will never be recognized as legitimate by the United States or, by that matter, the Parliamentary Assembly, because we responded in all of those areas.

I am pleased to tell you that we supported Margareta Cedersfelt, who is going to be the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Sweden, and we look forward to her visit here in the United States.

RICHARD HUDSON, Representative HUDSON, will be the chair of the first committee. So we are going to have active participation in the Parliamentary Assembly.

We had the chance to visit some other countries. But if I might, I think I am going to yield the floor and give my good friend and the leader of our congressional delegation trip an opportunity to expand on some of the things we were able to do in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Maryland, who has been such a leader in the area of human rights and international recognition of the challenges that our world faces today. I do appreciate his leadership and his partnership. We have worked shoulder to shoulder on so many issues.

Yes, I proudly rise with him this afternoon to talk about a very valuable series of meetings that our 12-member delegation had in 4 countries in Europe in recent days. This was Republicans and Democrats from the House and Senate, a truly bipartisan and bicameral delegation—a very large delegation—which I think my colleague will agree made a strong statement on behalf of the United States of America and on behalf of the U.S. House and Senate about the way we view European engagement and our partnership and friendship with the 50-plus member countries of the OSCE and their Parliamentary Assembly.

We visited Vienna, Austria, for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

As Senator CARDIN mentioned, we met with great success. Yes, I was re-elected to the position of vice president, and I appreciate the support of Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate in helping me get those votes to receive another 3-year term there.

RICHARD HUDSON, our colleague from the House of Representatives, has been very active as chairman of Committee No. 1 in the Parliamentary Assembly. He is highly regarded. He was reelected without opposition. So there are two bits of success there.

And then the great piece of work, actually, was with regard to Senator CARDIN's initiative on the rising hate and intolerance that we are seeing all around the world, particularly among member countries of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Senator CARDIN actually took the lead in challenging the leadership of the Parliamentary Assembly in saying that issues should be discussed.

Even though they weren't in an immediate, like, 3-week crisis mode, they deserved to be brought forward. And Senator CARDIN was able to get his resolution considered and passed overwhelmingly, and we made a strong statement on behalf of countering the rising hate and intolerance and countering the use of these things to buttress authoritarianism and to stoke conflict around the world.

We also passed a very important resolution about the tragedy, the outrage that has gone on in Belarus. I can tell you, the opposition party leader from Belarus was in this Capitol building just yesterday talking about the importance of support from places like the United States Congress.

I can tell you, Madam President, that Senator SHAHEEN and I are about to send a letter to our colleagues asking any and all of us to join a Freedom Caucus for the Belarusian people, the Belarus Freedom Caucus. We asked the opposition leader, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, to tell us whether that would be helpful. She said the formation of this caucus to support the freedom movement in Belarus would be a strong signal. It would be well received and effective on behalf of the opposition leadership there in Belarus.

Then, again, we reiterated our opposition to what Russia has done in Ukraine and particularly to the recent Russian military buildup and ongoing aggression in Ukraine. We did a lot there with the Parliamentary Assembly.

We went on to Estonia, met with leadership there—a former President, the current Prime Minister, other leaders. And, also, we had a chance to travel to the very easternmost part of Estonia and actually travel on the Narva River and look right across to Russia and the security guards there, understanding what our Estonian allies are up against with Putin's Russia staring right across the river at their freedom and democracy.

From there, we joined the Three Seas conference in Sofia, Bulgaria. I can tell you, this is a group of Eastern European former Soviet Bloc countries that are striving to be in charge of their own infrastructure and rely less on the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. I think the fact that 12 Americans

showed up, participated, met with Heads of state at that conference made a very strong statement of American support for freedom and for looking westwardly in trying to get their problems solved and their infrastructure needs met.

We also had a very meaningful visit to Norway, where we saw some American-Norwegian defense initiatives. I am very proud of the partnership that this Helsinki Commission—our organ of the American OSCE PA—and the way that we joined together to express our support for freedom, for democracy, for the rule of law, for opposing corruption, both at the petty local level and also at the larger State-sponsored level.

One other thing before I yield back and let my friend close. Particularly in Bulgaria, but also all during our trip, we were met with hearty thanks for the United States leadership in the global Magnitsky Act. This began as an initiative with Senator CARDIN, Senator Lieberman, Senator McCain, and me several years ago directed—during the Obama administration—directed toward individual Russians who had violated human rights and individual liberty in a very outrageous and gross way, allowing us to sanction individuals rather than causing harm to the people of Russia in that case. That has been expanded now to the global level and other countries are adopting this.

But I can tell you, when we arrived in Bulgaria, we were met with great thanks from people who are trying to combat lawlessness and corruption at the top level of government.

I just have to say, of course, BEN CARDIN has been the premier leader in this worldwide effort. It was gratifying to know and to learn firsthand on the ground there in Sofia, Bulgaria, that an initiative that began right here in this U.S. Senate years ago, and continues to this day, is having a beneficial effect on the people all across Europe and particularly in some of the countries that we visited.

I yield back to the Senator from Maryland.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, let me again thank Senator WICKER. Thank you for your leadership on so many issues.

But on this congressional delegation, for those who are not familiar, it is not easy to put together the type of opportunities to advance American values. And Senator WICKER took the responsibility as the leader of our delegation to make sure that we had the opportunities to advance American values. I thank him for all the effort he put into it. It was certainly extremely successful.

I just want to emphasize a few things before closing.

One, in Vienna, we did have an opportunity to meet with Rafael Grossi, who is the Director General of the IAEA. That is the International Atomic En-

ergy Agency, which has the responsibility of monitoring the nuclear programs throughout the world. Obviously, it has played a bigger role in regard to the program in Iran, and it was monitoring exactly what was happening in Iran under the JCPOA. They now don't have the same access, and we had a chance to talk with the Director General as to the challenges with the Iranian program. And I think it was helpful for all of us to understand exactly the role that the IAEA can play in regard to getting us information about what is happening on the ground in Iran.

Senator WICKER talked about our visit to Estonia, a strong ally partner, NATO partner. We showed our support by going to Narva, which is on the Russian border. It is a town that has a majority of Russian-speaking Estonians. It is an interesting community. But we could see across the river, very clearly, the Russian patrol boats. We know and heard firsthand of the concern of the Estonians. They saw what happened in Ukraine and they worry that same thing could happen in Estonia with Russian aggression.

I must tell you, our presence to reinforce the NATO commitment, I think, was an extremely important message that we gave to the Estonian people.

Mr. WICKER. Would the gentleman yield on that point?

Mr. CARDIN. I would be glad to yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. If I might add, people in Narva, Estonia, and people in the city across the river have access to each other across a bridge there. And it is clear to the people on the Russian side that their cousins and friends in Narva, Estonia, live a better life and have a better standard of living in this free country, this NATO ally called Estonia, than the Russian cousins and friends have on the other side.

I just thought I would add that to the discourse before Senator CARDIN moves on to discussing Norway and Bulgaria.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, let me move onto Bulgaria very briefly. Senator WICKER did cover Bulgaria.

The Three Seas Initiative, I wasn't that familiar with it before traveling to Bulgaria. It is an initiative by 12 States that are basically part of the Eastern European Coalition, states that are developing democratic institutions and democratic economies after the fall of the Soviet Union. They need to build up their resilience as a collective entity in energy, transportation, and digital infrastructure.

The Three Seas Initiative is to attract investment to connect the 12 countries together on infrastructure needs. It is for many reasons. It is for its own economic strength and growth, but also for resiliency against the efforts of China on its Belt and Road Initiative, which is trying to infiltrate

these countries and convert their way of economy to more of the Chinese system.

The Three Seas Initiative is an effort to have their own independent way of attracting capital. The United States is participating in the Three Seas. We are not a member, but we are participating and providing resources for the fund that is being developed that would be leveraged for these type of investments.

While we were in Bulgaria, we had a chance to have bilateral meetings. There were 12 Heads of state there. We had bilateral meetings with the President of Poland, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Romania. We had very constructive discussions about what is happening in their country.

We raised Helsinki issues with all these countries. Senator WICKER already talked about how we were welcomed by the Bulgarian leadership in regards to the imposition of the Magnitsky sanctions. We are heroes. They feel like they have a second chance to try to develop the type of anti-corruption mechanisms that they desperately need.

Our visit to Varna, which is on the Black Sea, was very educational to see how Russia is trying to dominate the Black Sea area and one of the reasons why they are so aggressive in Ukraine and the Crimea.

I think that was extremely helpful for us to understand the security risks and how we have to work with our NATO partners to protect the Black Sea area, particularly from the potential aggression—not potential—from the aggression of Russia.

Also in Bulgaria, we had a chance to visit a Roma village. It is not my first visit to a Roma village. I have visited over the years. It is a real tragic situation. The Roma population have been in Europe for centuries. They lived in communities for hundreds of years, yet they do not have property rights.

They have lived in their homes, and yet they do not have the opportunity to have their homes registered. And at any time, the government can come in and take away their property without compensation.

They rarely have reliable utilities.

The village we visited did not have water systems, so they had to use out-houses, et cetera. They had limited availability of fresh water. Their utility service is not reliable. And they go to segregated schools. They don't have the same employment opportunities.

So we, once again, will raise the rights of the Roma population as part of our commitment under the Helsinki Commission, and we are following up with the local officials to try to help in that regard.

Then, lastly, on our way back, we visited Norway. I learned a lot because I did not know about the pre-positioning program. I know my friend Senator WICKER already knew about this from his Armed Services service, but it is where we pre-position equip-

ment so that we can respond rapidly to a circumstance anywhere in the world. The Norway pre-positioning is actually used to help us in regard to the Middle East and our needs in the Middle East.

So it was an extremely, extremely, I think, productive visit to these countries. I think we did carry out our commitment under the Helsinki Commission, and we advanced American values. I think we represented our country well, and we were very well noticed.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, one other thing that our colleagues might not understand about the OSCE is their role in election observation.

As we were leaving Sofia on the morning of July 11, we crossed paths with some other representatives from the OSCE from European countries who were there to observe the parliamentary elections being held in Bulgaria that very day. Also, on the same day, Moldova, another member of the OSCE, was having parliamentary elections.

We have every hope that the results of these elections will be a further resolve in those two nation members to counter the corruption at the highest level, and we want to congratulate both of those member states of the OSCE for free and fair elections in Europe.

With that, I thank my colleague.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ELECTIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor to talk about the need for integrity in our elections.

On Monday, the Democrats on the Rules Committee took a field trip. The Democrats went to Georgia. They continued their efforts there to start a panic about election laws. Now, I am sure they will take more field trips in the months ahead. Taking over State election laws seems to be the Democrats' No. 1 priority. It was their No. 1 bill in the House, H.R. 1. It was their No. 1 bill in the Senate, S. 1. The Democrats claim that they are only responding to reforms passed in the States, and they say it is just the reforms passed in the States this year. Yet the election takeover bills that the Democrats have introduced were first drafted years ago. It is not in response to anything.

Don't let the Democrats kid you. It is an attack on States' rights and an attempt to stack the deck. After Democrats took over Washington, they rushed this takeover bill right through

the House of Representatives, with NANCY PELOSI at the helm. Then they tried to rush a similar bill through the Senate, and they failed. Senator SCHUMER continues to say the Democrats will try again.

At the State level, most recently in Texas, the Democrats are obstructing the democratic process in order to block election reforms from becoming law. Rather than allow an election reform bill to pass, Texas Democrats fled the State. They took private jets to Washington, DC. They hobnobbed with the Vice President, and they hobnobbed with the Speaker of the House and with many Democratic Senators. They sent out a lot of fundraising emails in the process, and they did a lot of television interviews. They took a lot of pictures of themselves, published them on social media, and told everyone they were making a heroic effort. They said it was a sacrifice.

Well, six of the Democrats became infected with the coronavirus. Then they spread the virus. It wasn't enough they infected each other; they spread the virus to staffers at the White House and here on Capitol Hill. It was a political stunt, and it turned into a coronavirus superspreader event, and I am sure they still consider themselves heroes. The hypocrisy is astonishing.

In the name of the democratic process, they actually blocked the democratic process, disregarded the will of the voters, and shut down the function of State government. They took a joyride on a private jet and endangered the health of many others. They believe in winning at any cost, and they put democracy in second place. This whole stunt is not about voter rights; it is about power. The Democrats are going to keep trying to keep the panic alive.

President Biden went to Philadelphia last week, and he spread even more falsehoods about the law. Now, I can understand why President Biden is doing everything he can to change the subject from the failures of his current administration. We have an open southern border that Americans are very disturbed about; we have surging violence in Democratic cities in the streets; and we have rising inflation that is hitting every family in America. Of course, President Biden doesn't want to talk about his one failure after another after another. So, instead, he throws rhetorical grenades at the Republicans, and he tells stories.

The Democrats' scare tactics on State voting laws are not going to work.

Their claims are false, and they have been repeatedly disproved.

The American people are finding out what is in the Democrats' election bills, and they do not like it. It is not pretty. It is ballot harvesting, which people reject. It is automatic voter registration, which many, many reject. It is taxpayer funding of political activities and campaigns, which Americans reject. It is giving the vote to felons on parole, which Americans reject.